

Session Report Cover Sheet

SESSION CODE: POVE-02-2	
Name of Convener(s): Ian Fox	
DATE: 20 March, 2003 ()	Session Title: Reducing Vulnerabilities – Managing Water-Related Disasters and Ensuring Health and Environmental Security
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Session Report

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Reporter/Rapporteur:
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1. Key Issues

The session focused on the key issues associated with water-related vulnerabilities that poor people face, including disasters such as floods and droughts, health risks associated with poor access to safe and sufficient water and sanitation and environmental security related to the integrity of ecosystems upon which poor people depend. A mixture of ideas papers and case studies were presented followed by an open discussion with a panel from a range of organizations to provide different perspectives that need to be taken into account in understanding the nature of vulnerability.

The discussion stimulated lively debate including questions relating to the impacts water-related disasters on achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The audience also commented on the fact that in their view many of the problems were already identified what was need was a political will to put in place solutions. The need to gain commitment to resources was highlighted and suggestions on how to achieve this discussed.

Members of the panel and audience also highlighted the important role indigenous coping strategies play in the development of strategies to reduce vulnerability to water-related disasters.

Issues relating to water-related indices were discussed and questions raised as to the degree of complexity that is required in these.

2. Key quotations

John Soussan (Stockholm Environment Institute)

Talking about the connection between the environment, aquatic ecosystem services and the well-being of the poor:

“Why have we got a session which brings together environmental management, health and disasters? Because the key to all of these is vulnerability”

“We need to look at tackling these problems from an ecological context, we need to understand how people are vulnerable.”

Robert Boss (WHO)

Talking about linkages between water and health:

“Often health is considered the preserve of the health system. This is not the case, other sectors also need to take responsibility for the health issues relating to the water sector”. Talking about health and water linkages

Ian Fox (ADB)

Talking about water-related disasters, flood management and poverty:

“ADB’s approach to flood management is to manage rather than react to floods, to avoid loss of lives by flood-proofing, to provide emergency evacuation measures for vulnerable communities... and to use flood control measures communities can afford, mindful of risk and long-term maintenance costs”

Shamsul Huda

Talking about the development of coastal management policy in Bangladesh:

“Development of physical infrastructure is an important first step in vulnerability reduction and in improving the livelihood conditions of the poor. Such efforts need to be linked within an integrated framework of poverty reduction to maximize the benefits”.

“The concerned executing agency missed the opportunity of using the polders as a rallying ground for cooperation with other water user agencies for an integrated development”.

“Narrow focus on structural solutions did neither prepare the agencies nor the stakeholders to confront the unexpected second generation problems”

Virginia Appel and Saleem Baloch (International Water Management Institute)

Talking about pro-poor harvesting systems in Balochistan, Pakistan:

“When there is enough water in the karez communities are assured of enough food and good health..... when there is not enough water people face hunger, the loss of their livelihoods, the loss of their animal herds, sickness and death.”

Brett Orlando (IUCN)

Talking on the Task Force on Adaptation Strategies:

“The original trickle of evidence has now become a flood “

“We are faced with a great destabilization and reshuffling of the world’s hydrological systems.”

Caroline Sullivan (Centre for Ecology and Hydrology)

Talking about the development of a water poverty index:

“The long term challenge of allocating and managing adequate safe water is fundamentally associated with the creation of secure livelihoods.”

Dajun Shen (Global Water Partnership)

Talking about the Mountain-River-Lake Integrated Water Resource Development Program in China :

“To manage the lake, the river must be harnessed; to harness the river, the mountain must be managed; to manage the mountain, poverty must be alleviated”

3. Actions

4. Commitments

5. Recommendations